



Williamsburg Conservation Update

Williamsburg Soil & Water Conservation District

2009 Annual Report

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Board of Commissioners

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NRCS

**Conservation Program
Manager**
Trinette Vereen

Our Purpose:
The protection of our
environment through
the wise use of our
natural resources

Conservation Achievement Award

Each year, the Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Commissioners awards a farmer or landowner for their outstanding conservation efforts.

This year the District would like to recognize Tommy Stuckey for his conservation farming practices and his dedication to protecting the natural resources of Williamsburg County. Tommy's farm consists of 400 acres where he plants cotton, soybeans and corn. He also raises goats. His operation is unique because he switched from conventional tillage to conservation tillage (strip-till) on his own. Conservation tillage works by planting the crop in the soil through a previous crop's residue. Tommy said that by switching to strip-till he has reaped the benefits of using less labor, less fuel and less wear and tear on his equipment. He also plants wildlife food plots on his property to enhance the wildlife habitat for turkey and deer.



Tommy is also very active in the local community. He is a member of the People's Farmers Cooperative and he was the original founder of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens of Williamsburg which was instrumental in defeating the mega landfill in Williamsburg County. He serves as Chair of the organization. Tommy and his wife of 19 years, Ellen Chandler Stuckey, live in Nesmith where Tommy grew up. He is a member of Nesmith Baptist Church and likes to spend his spare time fishing. The Conservation District appreciates Tommy's hard work of improving the natural resources on his farm and commends him for all of his efforts to preserve and protect the environment for all of the citizens of the county.

Quail Workshop

The Williamsburg and Georgetown Conservation Districts combined forces to host a quail workshop on March 31, 2009. The workshop was well attended and the participants ranged from private landowners and plantation managers, to staff from the Districts, FSA and NRCS. Participants were shown examples of brood-rearing habitat, nesting habitat, cover and native food. Everything from predation to releasing pen reared birds was discussed. Lunch was enjoyed by all at the Millwood Community House. The Districts continue to strive toward their goal of educating the public on conservation issues that are relevant to the local community.



Hemingway Drainage Issue



On September 1, 2009 Sam Ward of the SC Dept of Natural Resources and Trinette Vereen of NRCS met with County Supervisor Stanley Pasley to help resolve flooding issues in the Hemingway area. It was found that beavers had not only stopped up the road ditches but had dammed the area farm ditches as well. Ward was able to identify where the dams were located thus enabling the county to alleviate some of the flooding.

Beaver Workshop

The commissioners of the Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District sponsored a meeting on August 3 to discuss the growing beaver problem in Williamsburg County. Various organizations and businesses were represented and the feeling was that we definitely have a beaver problem which needs to be addressed. Mr. Noel Myers, of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service spoke to the group. The discussion included

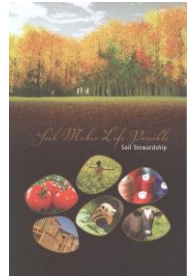


ways to start a beaver control program in the county. The group plans to meet again to tackle ways to try to improve the situation.

Soil Stewardship Week

April 26 - May 3, 2009

The theme of soil stewardship week for 2009 was “Soil Makes Life Possible”. The district commissioners distributed 700 stewardship fliers. It contained very useful information about the importance of soil and how it sustains us and its preservation which requires each of us to be “Keepers of the Land” and practice sustainable use of our Natural Resources.



What on Earth is Soil?

It is arguably one of the Earth's most critical natural resources. It is a substance that few people understand and most take for granted. Soil makes up the outer layer of the earth's surface, it nourishes the plants we eat, the animals and the thriving underground kingdom of bacteria, fungi, protozoa, earthworms and other microbes that are critical to the planet's food web.

How Much Soil Do We Have On Earth To Depend On For The World's Food Supply?

Look at the entire earth – 75% of the earth is covered with water in our oceans, lakes, rivers and streams. What is left represents land which is about 25%. Over half of that land is desert, polar or mountainous regions where it is too hot, too cold or too high to be productive. That leaves us with 12.5% which includes land that is limited by terrain, fertility or too much rainfall. It could be too rocky, steep, shallow or too wet to sustain food production. It leaves us with a very small fragment of the land area about 10% which represents the soil everyone depends on for the entire world's food supply. This small amount competes with all other soil needs such as, housing, cities, schools, hospitals, shopping centers, and more. Soil is a precious natural resource.

Topsoil is the most productive soil layer and the layer that is the first lost due to soil erosion. Erosion occurs naturally because of wind, water and ice acting on any exposed rock or soil surface. Human activities are responsible for 60-80% of all erosion. A single rainstorm can wash away centuries old accumulations of soil from damaged, neglected or badly managed ground. In many places, soils are eroding faster than they can be rebuilt. Though a renewable resource in theory, soil forms slowly. For all practical purposes, the soil we lose to erosion will never be replaced in our lifetime. It can take up to 500 years to form 1” of topsoil.

Since the Dust Bowl of the 1930's the protection of soil from erosion and degradation has greatly increased through the formation of Soil and Water Conservation Districts and several state and federal agencies. These Conservation groups assist landowners and the general public through education and technical assistance as to the importance of the soil and how to properly manage soil which humans literally owe their very daily existence.

Outstanding Senior Award

This year the Williamsburg Conservation District sought to recognize a senior with outstanding service or performance in the field of conservation.

Coker Plowden was awarded the \$500 cash prize for his efforts to be used to further his education. Coker has developed his own landscaping and irrigation business in which he uses eco friendly fertilizers and sprinkling systems. He plans to attend Clemson University and major in agriculture. Coker is an active member of Operation Clean Sweep which helps to pick up trash along the highways. He is also a member of the Kingstree Community Youth Work Group in which he has participated in summer mission trips to repair homes in Louisiana, Indiana, Georgia and North Carolina over the last five years. The District commends Coker for his exceptional work. Coker is the son of John and Becky Plowden and is a student at Williamsburg Academy.



Chairwoman Jayne Carsten presents Coker Plowden with his award

Lauren Goodman Attends Carolina Coastal Adventure

The Carolina Coastal Adventure is an educational workshop held at Santee Cooper's Somerset Facility for 9th and 10th grade students and it is hosted by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. Chosen by the Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District as their representative, Lauren Goodman was one of 69 students from across the state of South Carolina selected to attend the CCA.

The weekend adventure kept the students busy studying water quality and quantity, and the impact people have on water. The participants traced water from its source in the mountains to the coast and studied water sheds. They visited the Jefferies Generating Station on Lake Moultrie to see how electricity is made and saw how the locks work. To study water quality in a swamp environment, they canoed in Cypress Gardens and saw how important wetlands are



to the ecosystem. The group visited the Ft. Johnson Marine Center and explored Charleston Harbor from a research vessel and trawled for the creatures that live there. The students participated in many other fun and exciting activities.

Lauren commented "Before attending the camp, I never realized how all of our ecosystems depend on each other. I learned that we are each wasteful with our water resources. After the camp, I realized that every little bit we conserve can help our environment." Lauren is a 9th grade student at Williamsburg Academy and is the daughter of Will and Marsha Brown.



Earth Day

Money may not grow on trees, but heat, electricity, liquid fuel, and even plastics do. Children can learn how through *The Hidden Treasure*, an educational comic book distributed by the Williamsburg Conservation District. This teaching tool shows young people and families how woody biomass from our nation's woodlands can provide a wealth of products and energy resources. 500 copies were distributed to 4th grade students at every school in Williamsburg County on April 22, Earth Day. These students in Miss McCray's class at St. Mark Elementary study their comic books.



CSP Public Meeting

On September 21, 2009 Georgetown, Williamsburg and Horry Conservation Districts hosted a public meeting to inform the public about the new Conservation Security Program which is being offered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The program supports ongoing stewardship by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. The sign-up is offered in selected watersheds across the nation. CSP identifies and rewards farmers and ranchers who are meeting the highest standards of conservation and environmental management on their property.

Ms. Capps Class Celebrates Earth Day



Ms. Virginia Capps, the Child Development Teacher at St. Mark Elementary School, celebrated Earth Day with her students through a busy day of activities. They read the books *Recycling Garbage*, *The Zinnia* and *The Surprise Garden* which taught all about planting. At left Ms Capps and students Antonio Epps, Emmanuel Scott and Jada Moore planted some zinnias. Then the class went outside and planted an oak tree seedling on the school



grounds. The students played Earth Day activities on the class smart board which taught them about recycling paper, cans and plastic. They received Earth Day coloring pages from the Williamsburg Conservation District and they finished their day by picking up trash around the school.

Stewardship Day



Landowners, land managers and farmers were presented information at a Stewardship Day workshop which was held on March 25, 2009. Speakers gave overviews of various programs regulating land use activities in Williamsburg County.



Speakers represented the following agencies: South Carolina Forestry Commission, SC Department of Natural Resources, Department of Health and Environmental Control, Army Corp of Engineers, Williamsburg County Planning Committee and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. A question and answer session followed to provide more information.

Fourth Grade Foresters



On Arbor Day, December 4 the Williamsburg Conservation District commemorated the occasion by distributing pine tree seedlings to all fourth grade students in the county. Each tree came with planting instructions and a tree facts sheet. The students were excited to have their own tree to plant and care for as it grows. Planting the trees helps to teach the children the importance and value of trees, beautifies the local landscape and it helps foster a sense of accomplishment and environmental stewardship in our next generation. The District distributed over 500 trees to the fourth graders in the county. The fourth grade class of Williamsburg Academy presented the District Coordinator, Denise Smith, with a poster to express their thanks for the trees which they enjoyed planting.



2009 Poster Contest Winners



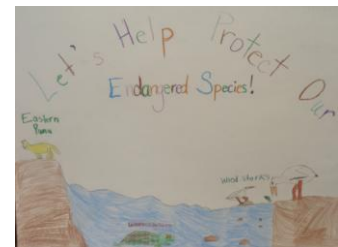
The Williamsburg Soil and Water Conservation District recently held its annual poster contest which is open to classes in kindergarten through third grades. The classes were asked to submit a poster on the topic "Endangered Species in South Carolina". The winners were:

Kindergarten – Ms. Washington's class at Greeleyville Elementary

First Grade – Ms. Brown's class at Greeleyville Elementary

Second Grade – Ms. Windham's class at Greeleyville Elementary

Third Grade – Mrs. Miles's class at Hemingway Elementary



Essay Contest Winners Announced

The topic for the 2009 competition was “Endangered Species in South Carolina”. Students were asked to consider the many threats that cause a species to become endangered, to explore ways in which we can help protect them, and how it will affect the environment if the species becomes extinct.

The winners were Treasure Smith, for the fourth grade, a student at Hemingway Elementary whose essay was on the Wood Stork, Will Timmons in the fifth grade, a student at Williamsburg Academy, whose essay was about the Loggerhead Turtle and Bald Eagle, Breana Ard, a student in the sixth grade at Williamsburg Academy, with an essay on The Finback Whale, Brittany Purvis, a student in the seventh grade at The King’s Academy, who wrote about the Red Cockaded Woodpecker and Zachary McDonald, a student in the eighth grade at The King’s Academy, with an essay on the Leatherback Sea Turtle. The essays covered many different species and helped the students learn very useful information.

The runner ups in the competition were Tristan Kinard and Bridgette Swaringer of Kingstree Elementary in the fourth grade, Andrea Brown of Hemingway Elementary and Tyler Allen of Williamsburg Academy in the fifth grade, Caroline Morris of Williamsburg Academy and Talia Tisdale of St. Mark Elementary in the sixth grade, Cody Storey of The King’s Academy in the seventh grade and Whitley Ward of Williamsburg Academy and Courtney Barnes of The King’s Academy in the eighth grade.

Conservation Partnership 2009 Accomplishments

The Williamsburg Conservation District through the Natural Resources Conservation Service offers several programs to assist landowners and farmers to put conservation on the ground. The Farm Bill programs include:

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), pronounced eequip, helps landowners and farmers on cropland, pastureland and forest land. On cropland, one of the practices that has been very successful in Williamsburg County is nutrient management through the use of precision agriculture, also known as grid sampling. This is where a soil test is taken and recorded using a GPS unit. Grid sampling helps you apply the correct amount of fertilizer and lime to ensure the most efficient yields while protecting water quality. It provides the right amount of nutrients at the best time and location so they are used efficiently. It helps analyze your fertilizer needs so that you don’t spend money needlessly on extra fertilizer.

For livestock, EQIP can assist farmers and landowners to install watering tanks, wells, cross fencing, permanent grass planting and pipeline. Water tanks give the livestock a protected place to drink. Animals drink clean water from a tank instead of a stream or pond. The animal’s health is improved by drinking clean water. They are less likely to get foot disease which lowers your veterinary costs. Permanent pasture planting, once established, reduces your costs and dependence on purchased feed. Cross fencing prevents you from overgrazing and helps you to better utilize the grass which also improves the herd and the environment.

In 2009, 63 applications were received and 13 were funded. \$250,913 was applied to 1,512 acres in the county.

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) helps landowners create, maintain, or improve food and cover for wildlife. Planting trees, grasses, legumes, and shrubs that provide food and cover will attract wildlife to an area. Prescribed burning is also used to enhance wildlife. Improving your forestland by removing unwanted trees from an area, opens up the tree canopy so that more sunlight can reach the ground which allows for different plant species to grow and improve the wildlife habitat.

In 2009, 15 applications were received for the WHIP program and 5 were funded. \$41,656 was applied to 845 acres.

The Conservation Security Program (CSP) supports ongoing stewardship by providing payments for maintaining and enhancing natural resources. In 2009, 22 applications were received and 8 were selected for funding.

All programs and services of the Conservation District, USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, and DNR-Land, Water and Conservation Division are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, marital status or handicap.



***Williamsburg County Soil & Water
Conservation District***

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AFFILIATE MEMBERS

The Williamsburg Soil & Water Conservation District would like to recognize our Affiliate Members who are a vital part of our conservation team. Without the monetary support given by the Affiliates, we would not be able to carry out the many programs to promote conservation stewardship within the county. The Conservation District is committed to helping the landowners and educating the students and of Williamsburg County.

CORPORATE

Farmers Telephone Company
Williamsburg County
Farm Bureau
Wake Stone Corporation
The Exchange Bank
of South Carolina
Martek

GOLD

Bank of Greeleyville
Williamsburg First
National Bank
Longlands Plantation

GOLD

Bethel C. DuRant
Anderson Brothers Bank
George C. Avent
Scotswood Plantation
Santee Electric Cooperative

SILVER

H. E. Hemingway
Richard Gamble
Kingstree Forest Products
John Yancey McGill

REGULAR

Jennie M. Johnson (In memory of)
Robert L. Johnson
Archie B. Ward
Kingstree Federal
Savings and Loan
Steve Squires
Sammy Squires
Williamsburg County
Development Board
Peter Gourdin